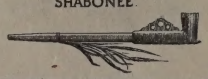
150.5 — Atalcatsa

GUACANAGARI
MONTEZUMA
GUATIMOTZIN
POWHATAN
POCAHONTAS
SAMOSET
MASSASOIT
KING PHILIP
UNCAS
TEDYUSKUNG

PONTIAC
CAPTAIN PIPE
LOGAN
CORNPLANTER
JOSEPH BRANT
RED JACKET
LITTLE TURTLE
TECUMSEH
OSCEOLA
SEQUOYA
SHABONEE

BLACK HAWK
KEOKUK
SACAGAWEA
BENITO JUAREZ
MANGUS
COLORADAS
LITTLE CROW
SITTING BULL
CHIEF JOSEPH
GERONIMO



TO PERPETUATE THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE REPRESENTED BY THE ABOVE CHIEFS AND WISE MEN THIS COLLECTION HAS BEEN GATHERED BY THEIR FRIEND

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1911

The Utakapa Language.

By

Albert S. Gatschet.

1885

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(Communicated.)

The Atakapa Language.

Although the Atakapa Indians have abandoned their tribal organization many years ago on account of the paucity of their people, there are still several families around Lake Charles who speak the language with a tolerable degree of fluency. The tribe once inhabited Lake Prien or Indian Lake, on all sides, and their last chief, Lo, lived on the west side. The young and old men have died, and only the women have preserved the language, and also remember something of the ancient customs and history of the tribe. One hundred years ago some Atakapa tribes extended as far east as the upper Bayou Teche.

The name of the tribe is taken from the Choctaw (or Mobilian trade-jargon) and means *man-eaters*; hatak, *person;* hapa, *to eat.* The Atakapas call themselves: "*Men of our nation,*" or "*our own people.*" Yukiti ishak — ishak meaning *men*, and yukiti, *we, our.* In the same way the Illinois Indians replied to the French explorers, in 1672, who first descended the Mississippi river and asked them for their tribal name: "Illiniwek!"—"*we are men,*" meaning men of our people. The Atakapa language is a very sonorous and vocalic form of speech, differing in its radicals from any other Indian language, and possesses but two consonants, which are difficult to articulate for English-speaking people: the *kh* and the palatalized *l.* The syllables generally end in vowels, but the words in one or several consonants, since the final vowels have been dropped through attrition and contact with the sounds following.

The noun inflects by cases, which are not formed by real case-suffixes, but by postpositions, which are what we call prepositions placed after the noun. The adjective forms a plural by reduplication of the root or theme, but in the noun only a few instances exist of a plural being formed. When

plurality has to be indicated, it is done in the *verb* of the sentence, which then assumes the prefix shak, or shok, or reduplicates its root like the adjective. The verb *to be* is expressed in different ways, often simply by the position of the words. The pronoun personal is identical with the pronoun possessive, and its forms are extremely simple. The verb does not incorporate the objective pronoun but in a very loose manner, and the noun-object is not incorporated at all by it.

But a curious combination of verbs is observed throughout; when *reading* or *speaking* is mentioned, it has to be added, whether these acts were performed while going, or while standing or sitting; *to be sick* always requires the additional complement of *lying down, laid up;* with *sewing* the term *to sit* is always connected. The Atakapa Indian will not say: the cat caught the mouse, but: *the cat running-caught the mouse.*

Like English, this Indian language possesses a large number of monosyllabic words expressing objects *of nature,* and also adjectives expressing the quality of *concrete* objects. They seem to represent radical syllables, but are more probably the result of the shortening of longer words by apocope. No dual forms exist in Atakapa, neither do the articles *the* or *a* exist, but have to be supplied by the run of the sentence. The numeral has three forms: a cardinal, distributive and adverbial, but no ordinal form. Since but a few conjunctions exist in the language, the *syntax* is necessarily very simple and primitive. The relative pronoun *who, which* is wanting, and its place is supplied by verbals or participles.

The names of the two largest rivers in the parish of Calcasieu contain the proper names of two Atakapa *chiefs.* Mermentau river is spelled in many different ways, but the Atakapa pronunciation is Inmanta-u. Calcasieu river embodies the name Katkash yok or "*Screeching Eagle,*" yok meaning: *to sing* and *to scream, screech.*

It is a pity that the instructed and college-bred men of Lake Charles and vicinity do not write down and publish this interesting language, but allow this remarkable relic of a high antiquity pass into undeserved obli-

vion. The Mobilian dialect of Choctaw, the Alibamu, Koassati and Biloxi, as spoken at Hickory Flat, Calcasieu parish, ought to be written down and left to posterity *just as well*, for these Indian languages, which in many respects are far more expressive than those of European origin, are not likely to survive very long to the present generation.

The myths, popular traditions and songs, ditties and dance-melodies should be collected from these Indians in their own language, and published in book form, with their English translations.

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Of the U. S. Bureau of Ethnology.

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